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FROM: PARIS

TO: Secretary of State

NO: SECTO 20, FEBRUARY 6, 11 PM

SENT DEPARTMENT SECTO 20; REPEATED INFORMATION BONN 280,
LONDON 637, MOSCOW 165, BERLIN 74.

AT MEETING MERCHANT AND COUVE LATE THIS AFTERNOON, LATTER
RAISED QUESTION OPERATIONS IN BERLIN AIR LANES SHOULD
RUSSIANS TURN OVER RESPONSIBILITIES TO GDR. MERCHANT
COMMENTED THAT IT WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT REASONABLE TO ATTEMPT
TO FORCE CIVIL AIRCRAFT TO CONTINUE FLYING UNDER HAZARDOUS
CONDITIONS. COUVE EMPHASIZED THAT TRAFFIC MUST CONTINUE
IN AIR LANES, AND THAT PRESENT PLANS TRIPARTITELY AGREED
AT BONN CONTEMPLATED SUBSTITUTION OF MILITARY FOR CIVIL
AIRCRAFT IF THEN REQUIRED. HE SAID WE DID NOT KNOW WHERE
FIRST CHALLENGE TO ALLIED ACCESS WOULD OCCUR BUT HE WAS
INCLINED TO THINK IT WOULD ARISE IN AIR OR AT ANY RATE,
OBSTRUCTION OF ALLIED TRAFFIC WOULD COME SIMULTANEOUSLY
ON LAND AND AIR. UNDER PRESENT PLANS AS EXPLAINED EARLIER
TODAY BY SECRETARY, TRAFFIC ON LAND AND AIR WOULD BE STOPPED
IF PHYSICAL OBSTRUCTIONS PLACED IN WAY. MERCHANT COMMENTED
THAT HARASSMENT MIGHT NOT OCCUR IMMEDIATELY IN AIR.

COUVE SAID WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR STOPPAGE AIR TRAFFIC,
AND HE ENVISAGED DISAGREEABLE DEVELOPMENT ALLIED MOVEMENTS
ON LAND AND AIR BLOCKED AND ALLIES STUCK IN UN. HE AGREED
THAT IF THREAT TO ALLIED ACCESS AROSE, IT WAS NATURAL
TO GO TO UN. THIS MUST, HOWEVER, BE DECIDED IN LIGHT OF
CIRCUMSTANCES. IF ALLIES WENT TO UN IT SHOULD BE WHILE
THEY ARE TAKING ACTION. THEY SHOULD EXPLAIN WHAT THEY ARE
DOING AND NOT SEEK A DECISION. MERCHANT COMMENTED THAT
POSSIBLE VARIANTS OF TERMS IN WHICH MATTER BE PUT TO
UN WAS POINT EXPERTS WOULD HAVE TO WORK OUT, BUT THAT
OBVIOUSLY ANY APPROACH IN UN WOULD DEPEND ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES,

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-2- SECTO 20, FEBRUARY 6, 11 PM FROM PARIS

ON HEAD COUNT IN ADVANCE AND FOR PURPOSE MOBILIZING PUBLIC PRESSURES AGAINST SOVIETS AND NOT TO INHIBIT OUR OWN FREEDOM OF ACTION.

COUVE CONTINUED THAT BASIS OF ANY APPROACH TO UN MUST BE THAT UN WOULD BE ASKED TO CONFIRM CORRECTNESS ALLIED ACTION. MERCHANT MADE POINT THAT WE DID NOT INTEND SIMPLY TO DUMP BERLIN PROBLEM IN UN AND REEMPHASIZED PURPOSE WOULD BE TO OBTAIN ADVANTAGE BY PUTTING POLITICAL AND PROPAGANDA PRESSURE ON SOVIETS. COUVE SAID HE FEARED NOTHING WOULD COME OF IT, BECAUSE IT MIGHT DELAY INDEFINITELY ALLIED DECISIONS. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] FONMINS MUST LOOK AT THIS QUESTION CAREFULLY WHEN THEY MEET IN MARCH.

COUVE RAISED MATTER ORGANIZATION OF WORK FOR FONMINS MEETING IN MARCH. MERCHANT SAID OUR THOUGHT WAS TO ESTABLISH BY MONTH'S END IN PARIS FOUR-POWER WORKING GROUP TO DRAW UP SUBSTANTIVE WESTERN POSITIONS WHICH WOULD PRESENT REPORT TO FONMINS MARCH MEETING. WE WERE ALSO THINKING OF REACTIVATING NATO COMMITTEE ON SECURITY TO GIVE NAC SENSE OF PARTICIPATION. DISCUSSION OF TIMING FONMINS MEETING SHOWED COUVE PLACED GREAT IMPORTANCE ON TRIPARTITE AS WELL AS QUADRIPARTITE MEETINGS "FOR SAKE OF PRINCIPLE". MERCHANT SAID DEC PROCEDURE COULD BE FOLLOWED WITH THREE MEETING INFORMALLY ON SUNDAY FOLLOWED BY QUADRIPARTITE MEETINGS MONDAY AND THEREAFTER. COUVE MAINTAINED TRIPARTITE MEETING SHOULD BE HELD ALSO ON LAST DAY TO EMPHASIZE BASIC RESPONSIBILITY OF THREE POWERS WHICH WOULD ACTUALLY PARTICIPATE IN ANY CONFERENCE WITH SOVIETS. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] RE MEETINGS SITE. COUVE SAID FRENCH STRONGLY PREFERRED GENEVA.

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GENEVA. MERCHANT INDICATED WE ALSO PREFERRED GENEVA
BUT COULD AGREE TO VIENNA IF OTHERS SO DESIRED.

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